



THE PARK BENCH

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**WHY PASTORS
NEED SABBATICALS**
PAGE 2



WHY PASTORS NEED SABBATICALS:

A TIME FOR RENEWAL, GROWTH, AND MAYBE A LITTLE ADVENTURE

If you've ever wondered why pastors need sabbaticals, let me start with this: 85% of seminary-trained pastors will leave ministry within their first five years.



by Pastor Lane

Five years! That's barely enough time to figure out where the best coffee spot is in your area of town. The reasons for this are varied, but one big factor is the sheer weight of ministry. It's a calling, yes, but it's also a demanding, relentless, and emotionally intense role. Sundays come around with shocking regularity (who knew!), and in between those, there's teaching, counseling, leading, studying, administrating, navigating crises, and handling the unexpected (like a global pandemic... or a church construction project... or both!).

This is why sabbaticals matter. They aren't vacations (though, let's be honest, there might be some much-needed hammock time). They are a sacred pause – an intentional step away from the weekly routine to rest, reflect, and refill the tank. The goal? To return with a deeper well of spiritual vitality, fresh energy, and renewed vision to serve in ministry for the long haul. Because, let's face it, a burnt-out pastor isn't good for anyone... and with my pink skin, I burn easily.

But here's the thing – sabbaticals aren't just for pastors. They're also for you, the congregation! Think of it this way: you get a break from me

(you're welcome). But more importantly, a sabbatical is a built-in reminder that the church isn't about the pastor – it's about the whole body of Christ. It's an opportunity for the congregation to step into new roles, discover new gifts, and grow in their ministry together. It's also a chance for our amazing staff to stretch and thrive in fresh ways, taking on new responsibilities and experiencing different aspects of leadership.

At its core, though, a sabbatical is a reorientation – a way for all of us to realign our focus on Jesus. The best thing I can offer as your pastor isn't sermons, leadership, or pastoral care. The greatest gift I can give you is my own deep, abiding love for Jesus Christ – a love that sustains, inspires, and fuels everything else. Taking this time to rest and reconnect ensures that I can continue leading from a place of spiritual health, not exhaustion.

What This Sabbatical Will Be for Us

From the end of April until the end of August 2025, I'll be stepping away to focus on renewal, growth, and a research project that I hope will ultimately serve both my family and my ministry. A huge thank you to the leadership at Oak Park for making this possible! The focus of my study will be Family Systems Theory (Bowen Family Systems) and how it impacts pastoral sustainability and spiritual health in growing congregations. In other words, how can pastors lead well in seasons of change without burning out? How can we create healthy church cultures that nurture both the leader and the people?

Ministry is a calling that affects the whole family, and investing in our marriage isn't

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just good for us – it's essential for our kids, our church, and my ability to serve well in the years ahead. So Chantelle and I will spend a bit of time away

together during the sabbatical.

And of course, there will be rest. Yes, I'll be reading and studying (because I can't help myself), but also intentionally setting aside time for stillness, prayer, and spiritual refreshment. My prayer is that I'll return with a clearer perspective, a stronger faith, and a renewed sense of joy in ministry.

The Big Adventure: A Family Road Trip

One of the most exciting parts of this sabbatical is a six-week road trip with my family. Chantelle, the kids and I will be going on a bucket-list road trip, exploring the Western U.S., from Glacier National Park in Montana to the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Our goal? To visit as many National Parks as we can, soak in the beauty of God's creation, and make unforgettable memories together.

Along the way, I'll be meeting with pastors and church leaders to discuss my research on pastoral leadership and sustainability. I'm eager to hear their stories, learn from their experiences, and reflect on what it means to serve well over the long haul.

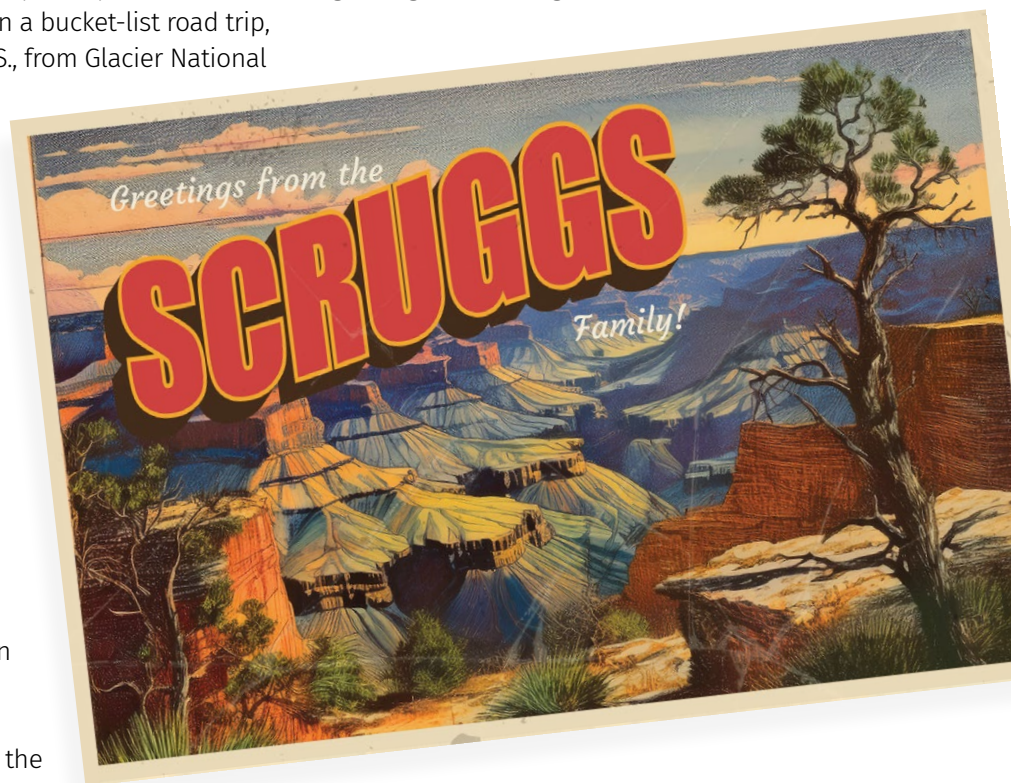
More than anything, this road trip is a gift to my family. Chantelle has been my incredible partner in ministry, and my kids have grown up knowing what it means to share in this calling. But ministry can

take a toll, and this time is as much for them as it is for me. They deserve a husband and dad who is rested, present, and fully engaged.

Thank You!

This sabbatical is more than just a break – it's an investment in the future of my ministry, my family, and Oak Park as a whole. I am deeply grateful for your support and for the space to step away fully so that I can return refreshed, refocused, and ready to serve with greater passion and clarity. Thank you for your prayers, your encouragement, and for making this possible.

I can't wait to see what God does in this season – for me, for my family, and for all of you. Let's keep growing in Christ together!



OAK PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST'S STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE



by Dave Sharpe

The Strategic Planning and Implementation (SPI) committee was formed as a temporary Ad Hoc committee of the Board in January 2024, with a pivotal role in faithfully guiding the church towards its future aspirations.

This committee, chaired by Dave Sharpe and comprising Doug Walker, Deb Moore, Steve Marston, Mike Mackinnon, Kenneth Cheung, and Lane Scruggs (ex officio), met regularly for a full year to craft a strategic plan that embodies Oak Park's Mission of living out God's transforming love and its associated Vision.

Committee Purpose and Mandate

The SPI committee's primary objectives were multi-faceted and deeply rooted in advancing Oak Park's Mission and Vision. The committee was tasked with:

- **Establishing Aspirational 10-Year Targets:** Defining Oak Park's Vision statements in measurable terms is crucial. This involves setting ambitious long-term goals that inspire and empower church members to embody the church's Vision in their daily lives.
- **Developing Decision Making Criteria/ Guidelines:** The committee aims to create robust decision-making frameworks to assist future governance bodies, including the Oak Park Board and Elders. These guidelines will ensure that resource allocation aligns with Oak Park's stated Mission and Vision, fostering consistency and strategic coherence.

- **Enabling Progress Monitoring:** Establishing mechanisms to evaluate both existing and future mission opportunities is vital. The committee's work will ensure that all activities and initiatives align with the established Vision statements, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation.
- **Integrating Biblical Principles into Ministries and Services:** A key aspect of the committee's mandate is to articulate how biblical teachings will be woven into the fabric of the ministries and services provided by Oak Park. This integration is intended to reinforce the church's commitment to its spiritual foundation and outreach to the surrounding community.

Transition to the Long-Range Planning Committee

Following the completion of the strategic plan, it was recognized that continued strategic work of this nature would be vital to the church; therefore, in February 2025 the SPI committee transitioned into the Long-Range Planning (LRP) committee, which is now a standing committee of the Board. This new phase will focus on the stewardship of long-term objectives and the identification of opportunities to resource and advance key strategic priorities. This committee consists of Dave Sharpe, Deb Moore, Doug Walker, Kate Petry, Steve Marston, and Lane Scruggs (ex officio). We thank all the members of the SPI committee for their hard work and are grateful to those who have continued on to the LRP committee, as well as the new members; the personnel continuity between the two committees ensures that the progress made in strategic planning will be sustained and enhanced over time.



Conclusion

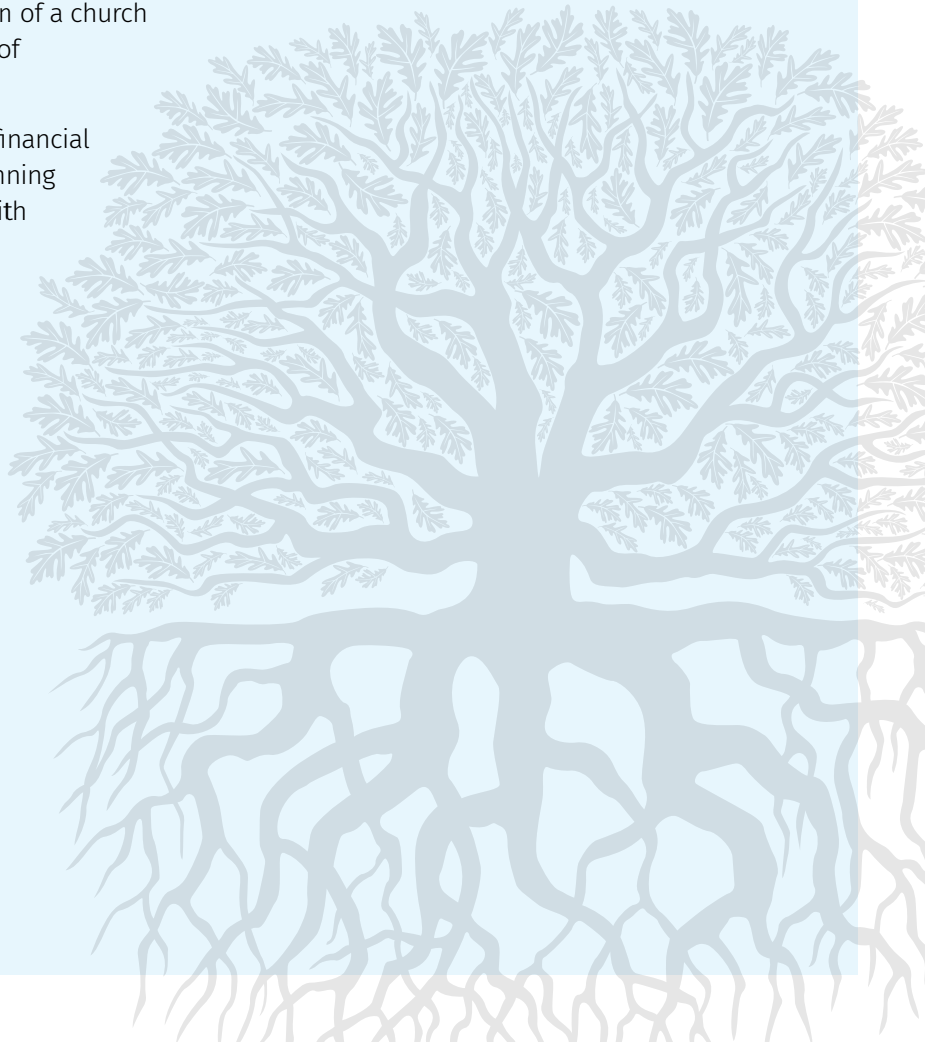
The establishment of the Strategic Planning and Implementation committee marked a significant step in Oak Park Church of Christ's journey towards fulfilling its Mission and Vision. Through carefully set targets, thoughtful decision-making guidelines, diligent progress monitoring, and the seamless integration of biblical principles, the committee created a robust framework for the church's future.

And now, the LRP committee will steward these long-term objectives. By identifying and resourcing strategic priorities, Oak Park Church of Christ will continue to grow and thrive, guided by its foundational commitment to living out God's transforming love.

All of this strategic work has already borne fruit! Some of the most prominent steps that have been taken are as follows:

- The transference and repurposing of the Heart for Home charitable organization from Ricot and Mandy's work in Haiti to our own local outreach ministries (Helping Hands, Community Tutoring, Benevolence, etc.)
- The formation of a new "Engagement Team" and sub ministries
- The creation and formalization of a church Organization Chart for clarity of responsibility and reporting
- The creation of a long-range financial model that will help with planning and guiding our leadership with current and future decisions
- The creation of Charter/ Mandate documents for each area of ministry to ensure there is clarity of scope with key deliverables outlined

Over the coming year you will hear much more about these initiatives and changes, but we wanted you to be informed appropriately as we continue the work.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CAMPER...



by Celeste Morris
Grade 5

My name is Celeste Morris and I have been going to Pine Lake Christian Camp for three years. I am super excited to go again. Let me tell you about a day in the life of a camper...

Every day there is a morning show – the camp staff wake everyone up with music over loudspeakers and you get to dance! After the morning show is breakfast, which is always yummy. Next, we rotate through centers (there is a craft, a game, canoeing, and on some days gaga ball or nine square). I really like doing the craft. Last year we got to make melty beads, it was great!

Then, we all gather together to sing worship songs. One of the leaders talks during this time; they tell us a Bible story and link it to the theme for the week. Two years ago, there was a pirate theme where we hunted for a map (which turned out to be the Bible). Last year, the theme was the Olympics in which we competed with our teams in different activities. Afterwards, we have cabin clean up (we get to decorate our cabins while keeping it tidy). My favourite was the beach theme – we put blankets on the ground like it was water and the sand. We then have lunch, with more delicious food! We get to sing silly songs like “The elbow song” and “What shall we do with... (another cabin).”

After lunch, we have quiet time where we get to read or draw in our bunks. Once we are all rested, we come out for the best part of the day: tuck!

PINE
LAKE
CAMP



Tuck is a snack in the afternoon that is candy! We listen to a story while eating our tuck.

Once we finish tuck, we play a group game. My favourites are Capture the Flag, Predators vs. Prey, and Dr. Dodgeball. Sometimes the winners of the games get points for their teams in the week-long challenge. Then there is free time where we can settle down, play gaga ball, nine square, basketball, or just hang out with friends. My friends and I like swinging on the big swing where we try and kick the leaves way up high on the tree nearby. It is a great opportunity to get to know other kids and build friendships. Then... MORE FOOD! Supper is great, we even get dessert! The camp cooks are wonderful and make delicious food.

After supper is another group game and campfire. We get to sing. Some of the songs are silly, like “The Mango Song” and some are more serious. This is another time where we get to sing worship songs. After snack it’s time for bed. We crawl into our bunks - the top bunk is my favourite. Our counsellors sometimes read a book to us as we fall asleep.

I love going to camp. It is a week where we get to be outside, learn about God and hang out with friends. I can’t wait to go back again this summer!

I AM He.

The time of Passover is chosen by the cycle of the moon. It is always a full moon and somewhat light, even in the darkness amongst the trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. The garden was relatively small – a few olive trees and an oil press to make olive oil.



By Ansophie Joubert

It was probably quite crowded when a detachment of soldiers (some translations mention a cohort which was at least 200 soldiers) accompanied Judas to the garden that night of the arrest. Add the officers of the chief priests and a few Pharisees and no wonder Mark calls it a “great multitude”. They came prepared with weapons, lanterns and torches to fight the disciples and seek a fleeing Jesus in dark nooks and crannies.

They were not prepared for the course of events.

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Whom are you seeking?”

They answered Him, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Jesus said to them, “I am He.”

Now when He said to them, “I am He,” they drew back and fell to the ground. (John 18:4-6)

When Jesus stepped forward and introduced himself, He used the same words that Moses heard when he asked God who He is: *I AM*. (Exodus 3:14)

The reaction was forceful.

Could we focus on this image this Passover-time? The power of the words of God from the mouth of God. *I AM*. The King of the universe – our King.

Can you “see” your enemy on the ground before Jesus?

How had those moments of confusion and stunned shock played out? As it is written, one could miss the dramatic and profound impact on the people there. I am sure it took some time for everyone to stand up and dust themselves off, come to terms with what just happened and continue with the arrest.

Surely the impact of the encounter with Jesus could not leave everybody indifferent as to the power and regal bearing of this Man. There is so much that is not written. It is exactly as John says, that everything about Jesus could not be confined to all the books in the world. (John 21:25)

Looking superficially and fleetingly, we will see nothing.

For those who turn aside and look deeper – the divinity of the Person of Jesus shines through.

We look up to the Cross to find the Counsellor of Revelation (3:18).

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich

[our testimony of miraculous provision in hard times];

and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed

[the robe of righteousness which is Jesus (Isaiah 61:10)];

and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see

[revelation knowledge to discern the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:1)].

He is the Christ,
the Son of the living God.

WHY WE SERVE: THE CAFÉ TEAM.



by Keith and Laurel Traptow

The Café Team is responsible for providing various coffees and teas for the congregation on Sunday. Plus, for certain special events (like the Christmas Eve services) the Café Team serves refreshments and snacks. Usually 10-12 pots of coffee are brewed every Sunday. The setup crew sets up the Café area with cream, milk, hot water, tea and jugs of cold water. The cleanup crew takes over from the setup crew, then cleans everything up. All café volunteers on the setup and cleanup crews for that Sunday work to replenish anything running low.

With the recent switch to two services, the staff has been amazing and stepped up to help where they can: Lane and Alvin ensure that they have four pots of coffee brewed early Sunday mornings, and Padraig is our go-to if we are running low on supplies or need help in any way.

A little bit about us (the team leads):

Keith and I have attended Oak Park since the building was opened in 1988 – in fact Keith attended

the Park Hill Church of Christ location before the move. We met at Oak Park in 1992 and married in 1994.

The Café Ministry was officially started in 2004, the dream of Brad Herman, Associate Pastor at the time. He developed a relationship with Fratello Coffee Roasters (started by a Christian organization) which allowed the church to purchase high-quality coffee wholesale. We decided to volunteer to do the setup along with some others, as we thought it would be a perfect way to serve behind the scenes. At the time, coffee and cell phones were becoming popular in social culture, so we also felt it would be a wonderful way to engage people and encourage interaction.

In April of 2009 the woman who was leading the Café Team married and moved on to another church. We stepped into what we thought was a temporary position and are still here! Leading this team includes recruitment, buying coffee, tea, equipment and organizing a schedule. We are so grateful for the help of Padraig, who orders the cups, lids, sugar, stir sticks and anything else we may need.

During the Covid lockdown, the church renovation and the Calgary water main break, the Café was on hold. We really missed this ministry and are thankful to be getting our wonderful team back up and running consistently after several years of interruptions. We are so grateful for our dedicated team who use their gifts to serve in this important role of hospitality and bringing people together.

Why we serve:

- 1 It brings people together in a practical way (coffee/tea is a part of everyday life)
- 2 We can serve behind the scenes
- 3 We get to meet new people when they are getting their drinks
- 4 It is a fulfilling way to live out God's transforming love
- 5 It helps people feel welcome at Oak Park

If you would like more information about the Café Team, please reach out to us.

Laurel: 403-829-3607
ltraptow@shaw.ca
Keith: 403-829-4009



opconline



11263 Oakfield Drive SW, Calgary AB, T2W 4M2
403-251-5150 office@oakpark.ca

oakpark.ca

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